**January 2022
Theme: When God Intervenes
From Grief to Gratitude:
“Working Through the Pain: From Grief to Gratitude”**

**Summary:** “Ask for God’s timing and leading. As you make decisions in faith, determine your heart to say, ‘Be still and know that He is God’ (Psalm 46:10).” Our writer reminds us that the key to “Working Through the Pain: From Grief to Gratitude” begins with being still. This program is based on the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth are travelers on a God-directed path to joy during despair.

**Scriptures:** Book of Ruth specifically Ruth 1:16-17, 21; and Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28; Psalm 23:6, 46:10, 63:3-5; Ecclesiastes 7:10; Isaiah 40:31, 43:19, 61:1-3; Hebrews 4:16, 13:8; Leviticus 19:9, 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19; Philippians 4:19; I Thessalonians 5:18; II Chronicles 26:5; I Samuel 26:23; Proverbs 31:17; Luke 1:33.

**Songs:** *“*Does Jesus Care?” Rejoice, page 560; “He Giveth More Grace” *Rejoice,* page 557*.* From YouTube Elevation Worship Modern Evangelism *Graves Into Gardens*” Elevation Worship Modern Evangelism (YouTube); The wedding song, “*Whither Thou Goest,*” uses direct quotes from the Scripture in a different application. Did anyone in your group have the song at her wedding?

**Suggestions and Helps**

**Resources***:* Poster and invitation available at www.wnac.org/treasure/programhelps.

**Publicity:**  See the WNAC website, Treasure, Treasure Promotional Materials for invitations, Posters, and PowerPoint announcements. Other ideas include encouraging women to invite their mothers, mothers-in-law, daughters, and daughters-in-law. These relationships can add some insight to this program.

**Ice breaker:** Since Naomi is a traveler on a God-directed path to joy, let’s follow the trip with her. Make a road map of her journey back and forth from Bethlehem-Judah to sojourn in the country of Moab and then back to Bethlehem specifically. Check Bible dictionaries, maps, and the topography of the region. What physical and cultural challenges did she face? How long did the one-way trip take the first time? Can we ever go back to where we came from?

**Presentation:** Pray toknow the best way to approach your group in presenting this study. The writer gives an outline within the study: “In our grief, God gives us strength to continue on with our lives, giving us a **place**, **purpose**, and **provision**.” This outline can help you organize your thoughts and presentation. Naomi and Ruth came from a place of grief to a place of joy. Compare and contrast these two places, including physical and spiritual characteristics. In their going and their return, compare their purpose. Which purpose was God-centered? Finally, what provisions did God supply in both places? Were the provisions in Moab founded on the strength of humans or God? What were the superior provisions of Bethlehem-Judah? How was the kinsman-redeemer superior in Ruth’s present-day and in the future of all believers?

**Testimony:** Privately ask one or two women for testimoniesregardingtheir experiences with grief, especially if you have widows in your group. If you have a small group without widows, then ask someone who has experienced the death of a loved one for a testimony. Do not surprise anyone by asking for a testimony during the program presentation.

**Breakout Groups:** Discussion questions for breakout groups:

1. Do you think that “running away from a crisis and changing locations” is always God’s will?
2. How can you know God’s will?
3. Is doing God’s will at one point in time “a guarantee of security from future catastrophes”?
4. How can we have faith to keep seeking God’s will?

Further discussion and summaries brought back to the entire group can include a discussion of Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28.

**Study:** The story of Ruth and Naomi is also the story of the harvest. Challenge the women to do a private Bible study on the Harvest as mentioned in the Bible. Researching harvest times and simple equipment in Bible times and comparing that to today’s harvest machinery can lead to insights on the spiritual harvest in those times and today’s spiritual harvest. Both have the same goal, but the tools have changed.

**Missions:** How canwe apply the principles in this story and the Scripture principles in today’s world? “And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, ‘Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace.’” Leviticus 19:9; 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19 explain God’s plan for providing for the poor, needy, and landless individuals. Pray earnestly about how you and your group can use this pattern to help. Note that the needy did have physical labor to perform to obtain food. Search for compassion and wisdom.

**Service:** Since “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27), arrange for the church’s widows to be visited in person or by phone or note each week. Use prayer and discretion to arrange this.

**Prayer:** Prepare enough prayer requests so that each one maydraw a request with the name of a widow or single woman who needs prayer. Pray daily for a month until the next meeting.

**Refreshments:** Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz enjoy a variety of food items in their lovely story. Try to include these in your refreshments: barley, water, vinegar, wheat. Here are some interesting old recipes to try.

Barley Sugar Candy

3 cups barley sugar, 2 cups water, 1 lemon, pinch cream of tartar

Dissolve sugar in water. Add a thin rind of lemon and cream of tartar. Cook to soft-ball stage. Remove lemon rind. Add strained juice of the lemon and cook to the hard-crack stage. Pour on a buttered platter or slab. When candy begins to set, cut in strips. As it cools, twist each strip. Keep in an airtight container.

Cherry Apple Cider Vinegar Drink

1 mint leaf, muddled/crushed with a wooden spoon in a glass

2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons cherry juice

Squeeze in the juice of 1/2 lime

Fill glass with juice and stir. Ruth may not have, but you can add some ice.

**Extra:**

**Sanctity of Life Sunday – January 16, 200. Find resources online.**

**Poem by Mary Altgilbers**

**The Crystal Sea**

I want to step onto the Crystal Sea
Will my faith be enough to walk on water or will you carry me
When I stand in the presence of the heavenly host
I will reach out to You first and foremost

I come to you and approach your throne
Asking forgiveness, for this I must do on my own
Loosened are the shackles to all my sin
I will not allow shadows of doubt to creep in

All the weights and burdens that dragged me down
Are gone when I chose to wear the pure white gown
I want to look the other way when my view is obscured by deceit
I want to close my ears to the corruption and depravity

Protect me from the infernal region
Keep me close in your beautiful creation
You gave me all hope when your Spirit filled me
And now I am enveloped by your mercy

I am free from grief and fears
Free from fighting back the tears
The clarity of Your Holiness flows through me
When I see you across the Crystal Sea

When I stand at the waters’ edge as your bride
My faith will sustain me until I reach the other side
Washed by the blood, drenched with the Everlasting
As I walk on water a new life beginning